

# Office of Attorney General Terry Goddard



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## **Terry Goddard Stepping Up Efforts Against Tobacco Sales to Minors**

(Phoenix, Ariz. – April 23, 2007) Attorney General Terry Goddard today announced that his Office will be increasing enforcement efforts against retailers who illegally sell tobacco products to minors. In cooperation with the Arizona Department of Health Services and local law enforcement agencies, the Arizona Attorney General's Office will be conducting more undercover investigations of retailers to reduce sales to minors across the state.

"I'm committed to reducing youth tobacco use in Arizona," Goddard said. "Our youth compliance volunteers will be determining if retailers are following state law. Selling tobacco products to minors is against the law, and those who do will be held accountable."

Arizona law prohibits the sale or furnishing of tobacco products to people under 18 years old. Statistics show that about 80 percent of adult smokers begin before age 18. Every year in Arizona, over 6,000 young people under age 18 become smokers. Approximately 21 percent of Arizona high school students say they smoke, and over 14 million packs of cigarettes are smoked or purchased each year by Arizona kids.

The Attorney General's Office uses youth volunteers to work undercover with its agents and local police officers to identify retailers making illegal tobacco sales. Since 2002, more than 10,000 undercover inspections have been conducted throughout Arizona.

This year's "Counter Strike" campaign begins this week in Yavapai County. The campaign starts with a newspaper ad in the Prescott Daily Courier reminding retailers that selling tobacco to minors is illegal. Compliance investigations will take place later in the week in Yavapai County. A follow-up ad will run on May 6, reporting the names of retailers that passed or failed the compliance checks. The Attorney General's Office will continue its campaign in May in Mohave, Pima, Yuma and Maricopa Counties.

Goddard offers the following tips to increase compliance with the law:

- Train employees to card anyone who appears to be under 30 years old.
- Install devices that prompt employees to request identification whenever a customer attempts to buy tobacco.
- Post signs informing customers that they will be required to show identification and denied access to tobacco if they are underage.
- Discipline employees who make such sales.
- Reward employees who refuse to sell tobacco to minors.

To report illegal tobacco sales to minors or for more information on how to participate in the Counter Strike program, please call the Counter Strike Hotline toll-free at 1-866-342-7855. If you are calling from within the Phoenix area, dial 602-542-1809.

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